

Forget Promotion

If...

By SFC Andres M. Sanchez

As the Chief NCO of the Field Services Branch (better known to the field as the 1st PERSCOM "Promotions Branch"), I've seen too many requests for retroactive promotion as an exception to policy denied. Often, these requests involve soldiers or NCOs who have inprocessed without a promotion packet and cannot obtain one from the losing command and/or personnel detachment (PD) within the 90-day time period stipulated in AR 600-8-19, **Enlisted Promotions and Reductions**. This usually occurs because the soldier lost the packet while on leave en route or forgot to acquire the promotion packet before departing the losing command.

Army policy specifies the minimum documentation required to reconstruct a promotion packet. Soldiers must present a copy of the promotion board proceedings and either a legitimate copy of the Promotion Standing List (AAC-C10 SIDPERS Report) or a statement issued by the losing command PD verifying that the soldier/NCO was recommended for promotion by a valid board and had attained promotion status.

In USAREUR almost 10% of promotable soldiers arrive with either documents missing or no promotion packet. Almost one-third of that number aren't integrated into the Promotion Standing List — thereby causing the soldier to miss a possible promotion.

In most cases it's because of a lack of communication between the gaining and losing command in verifying the soldier's promotion status.

You also have situations where soldiers thought they have met a cut-off score, based on the last re-evaluation month, only to find out the promotion packet sat in some clerk's in-box and was

turned in late to the PD. Sound familiar? Well, it happens every day.

Again, AR 600-8-19 specifically stipulates that the promotion effective date is based on the date the promotion packet is received at the PD and *not* when it was prepared. In other cases, soldiers don't realize they were never integrated on the C10 until they thought they met the cut-off score (at this time it's too late to rectify); the regulation prohibits an administrative adjustment that may lead to a retroactive promotion.

We receive more phone calls regarding the examples above than any other situation. Most often the response must be that these aren't grounds for an exception to policy. However, the Total Army Personnel Command (PERSCOM) has developed a new system to manage semi-centralized enlisted promotions. This new system uses the Enlisted Distribution and Assignment System (EDAS) instead of the Standard Installation/Division Personnel System (SIDPERS). Personnel detachments will use this system to update promotion point data at the top of the system. This is an on-line system that should eventually eliminate the need for the losing command to verify the soldier's promotion status provided the losing command has updated the soldier's promotion status via EDAS.

As the Army enters the final stages of its "reengineering," promotions are becoming more competitive. All the more reason for NCOs to get involved. That includes the corporal, specialist or sergeant who is awaiting promotion.

He/she must be responsible and take an active role in acquiring the complete promotion packet upon reassignment. Whether we're an infantry sergeant or a journalist sergeant major, we all need to put our two cents' worth in the program. Too many soldiers pay the price and learn the system the hard way. We can't sit back and blame the "Personnel World" if we NCOs haven't offered to help or at least ask what went wrong.

We must get involved and implement

some sort of program or procedure to prevent this from happening. In my professional opinion, the solution is within our reach. Let me give some simple, effective hints:

- *Include the soldier's name on the distribution line of the board proceedings and ensure distribution is made.*
- *Put an NCO or SPC(P) (personnel type) in charge of promotions in your battalion S-1. They know what it's like to miss the cut-off scores by two points. They know the importance of getting the re-evaluation into the PD before the end of the month.*
- *Provide soldiers with copies of the Transmittal Form (DA Form 200) right after the battalion S-1 submits the re-evaluation/recomputation to the PD, not three months later.*
- *Conduct quarterly NCODP classes on the enlisted semi-centralized promotion system (SGT/SSG). We all have access to personnel sergeants, whether at the battalion, brigade S-1 or Personnel Detachment.*
- *Institute procedures at battalion and company levels to ensure soldiers do not depart without a copy of the AAC-C10 report and board proceedings, just like you do on NCOER.*

I think the best and most effective way to tackle this problem is by educating our soldiers and NCOs. Remember, *knowledge is power* — and knowledge is what it will take to put this issue to rest. I'm confident that the NCO Corps can and will tackle this problem, by just getting involved and making sure subordinates have the knowledge to manage their own careers. ■

Sanchez is Chief NCO, Field Services Branch, HHC 1st PERSCOM, Heidelberg, Germany.